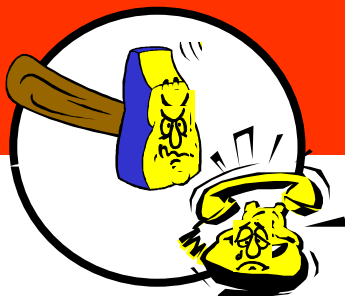


The Federal Communications Commission

is

SLAMMING



The Slammer

A Consumer Information Bureau Publication

1-888-CALL-FCC (Voice)

1-888-TELL-FCC (TTY)

www.fcc.gov



SLAM THE SLAMMERS!

WHAT IS SLAMMING?

“SLAMMING” is the illegal practice of changing a consumer's telephone service without permission. New consumer protection rules created by the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) provide a remedy if you've been slammed. The FCC's Enforcement Bureau also punishes slammers.



WHAT ARE YOUR RIGHTS IF YOU HAVE BEEN SLAMMED?

If you have been slammed and have NOT paid the bill of the carrier who slammed you:

You DO NOT have to pay anyone for service for up to 30 days after being slammed. This means you do not have to pay either your authorized telephone company (the company you actually chose to provide service) or the slamming company.

You must pay any charges for service beyond 30 days to your authorized company, but at that company's rates, not the slammer's rates.

If you HAVE paid your phone bill and then discover that you have been slammed:

The slamming company must pay your authorized company 150% of the charges it received from you. Out of this amount, your authorized company will then reimburse you 50% of the charges you paid to the slammer. For example, if you were charged \$100 by the slamming company, that company will have to give your authorized company \$150, and you will receive \$50 as a reimbursement.

With these rules, the Commission has taken the profit out of slamming and protected consumers from illegal charges.



HOW CAN YOU AVOID BEING SLAMMED?

Be a smart consumer. Always examine your phone bill immediately and thoroughly!

Be aware of the ways in which companies are legally permitted to change your telephone service. The FCC's rules require companies to obtain your clear permission before such a change.

For example, a company may send you a Letter of Agency (LOA) to verify that you want to switch your service to a new company. The LOA is only valid if you sign and date it. It must be used solely to authorize a change in company, and it must be clearly identified as an LOA authorizing the change. Only sign it when you are sure you want to change companies.

Be careful to read prize packages or contest material. Slammers frequently try to get you to accept their service by asking you to respond to an offer which also includes your consent to change service. An LOA is only legal if it is a separate document, not part of a prize package or contest.

Sometimes telephone companies send consumers checks to induce them to change their telephone company. When you sign and cash this check, your company is changed. Such a check is only legally binding if it includes the required LOA language, both on the front of the check in bold type and near the line on the back of the check where you will endorse it.

A company might solicit your telephone business over the phone or electronically. Companies must then verify your authorization by asking you to confirm your order by some means, such as calling a toll-free number used exclusively for this purpose. A company may also employ an independent third party to verify your request to change telephone companies.



WHAT CAN I DO IF I'VE BEEN SLAMMED?

If your telephone company has been changed without your permission:

Call the slamming company, and tell them that you want the problem fixed. If you have not paid, tell them that you will not pay for the first 30 days of service.



WHAT CAN I DO....

Call your authorized company (local or long distance) to inform them of the slam. Tell them that you want to be reinstated to the same calling plan you had before the slam. Tell them that you want all "change of carrier charges" (charges for switching companies) removed from your bill.

Depending on where you live, you may be able to file a complaint with your state regulatory commission, which might be called the "Public Utilities Commission," the "State Corporation Commission," or something similar. If the commission does not handle complaints, call the office of the state's Attorney General. Generally, the state Consumer Affairs Office can refer you to the correct agency, whether it is the commission or the Attorney General. The number for your state regulatory commission, Attorney General, or Consumer Affairs Office is in the blue pages, the "State Government" section of your phone book.

Many states have agreed to handle slamming complaints, but you can find out for certain whether or not your state handles these complaints by telephoning. You can also find out whether or not your state will accept complaints by checking the FCC web site at www.fcc.gov/cib/.

The individual state Public Utilities Commission or Attorney General's Office can advise you on the appropriate procedures for filing complaints with local or Federal authorities. **In addition, the FCC's Consumer Center at 1-888-CALL-FCC (voice) or 1-888-TELL-FCC (TTY) provides information on slamming. If your state does not administer the anti-slamming rules, contact the FCC at these numbers for instructions on how to file a complaint with the FCC.**

HELP THE FCC SLAM THE SLAMMERS !

